

7.5.6. Capacity/Organizational Profile

Mission: Chattanooga Endeavors seeks to restore ex-offenders to productive roles in society through training, counseling, and education programs that remove the barriers to meaningful employment and that teach the skills needed to enter the workforce and to live within the law.

History: Originally funded by The Private Industry Council under the Job Training Partnership Act, the programs and services of CEI were developed as a demonstration project for the Chattanooga chapter of Dismas, Inc. (Nashville). The purpose of this project was to create a non-residential alternative to Dismas House that would: (a) capture a larger segment of the local ex-offender population for treatment and rehabilitation services, (b) reduce the unit cost for providing these services and (c) make a greater contribution to the efforts to curb the rate of crime in the Chattanooga area. Although serving the same population with the same general aim (i.e., to prevent crime by assisting ex-offenders return to productive roles in society), CEI has pursued a completely different approach from that of Dismas House. Whereas Dismas House provides food and shelter as a way of assisting prisoners return to their communities, CEI helps its clients by offering skills-development opportunities and by providing them with a range of support services as they move into the workforce.

Programs and Services: CEI's address the most significant barriers to employment for ex-offenders through: (1) employability training to prepare beneficiaries for the job, assist them in securing suitable employment, and coach them in vocational goals; (2) adult basic education and GED preparation to improve the literacy skills for those who have not obtained at least a GED;

and (3) relapse-prevention counseling for those with histories of substance abuse to obtain the skills needed to manage sobriety.

These three services are designed help ex-offenders secure and retain meaningful employment and to prevent “reciprocal relapse” – where a recurrence of criminal behavior results in other personal problems (e.g., homelessness, unemployment, substance abuse, and domestic violence) and where a recurrence of personal problems results in other criminal behavior. The prevention of reciprocal relapse is the focus of on-going case-management activities.

Target population: CEI serves male and female, adult, criminal offenders residing in the Chattanooga area on probation and/or parole. This population (approximately 2,000) is 42% African American and 18% female. Over 60% have substance abuse disorders, 30% have emotional disorders, 57% read below the 4th grade level, and 40% were unemployed at the time of arrest. Over the 45 months ending 6/30/04, CEI has assisted 562 ex-offenders in the employability training component of its program.

Personnel: CEI employs 6 regular, fulltime staff members and 3 beneficiaries in temporary, work-experience positions. The turnover rate for regular employees is 5%.

The organization’s staff is a blend of ex-offenders and industry professionals. Ex-offenders provide a bridge between the organization and its beneficiaries which gives CEI an important advantage in delivering its services efficiently and effectively. In addition to our permanent staff, we contract with a therapist for substance abuse services and with an accountant for

financial management and reporting. Tim Dempsey is the organization's founding Executive Director. He has 14 years experience working and living with ex-offenders and was responsible for managing the demonstration project which resulted in the creation of Chattanooga Endeavors. Mr. Dempsey earned a BA from at the University of Notre Dame and a MA from Catholic University of America. He is presently enrolled in the Senior Executive MBA program at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

Volunteers: CEI has 161 active volunteers who contribute approximately 800 hours a year to the organization. Volunteers serve on the Board of Directors and its various committees setting policy and carrying out important functions of the organization. They make presentations to beneficiaries on aspects of reentry, employment and independent living. They also provide the community support needed by the Board to effectively carry out its fundraising and public relations functions.

Annual Budget:

Funding sources and amounts:

Community partnerships and collaborations: From area businesses that hire beneficiaries to religious communities that provide communication channels for promotional activities, the

network of relationships CEI has established in the community is vast. Included in this network are: (1) The Board of Probation and Parole & The Department of Corrections which places ex-offenders at CEI to comply with employment conditions of community supervision; (2) Hamilton County Sessions & Criminal Courts which use CEI as an alternative sanction in both misdemeanor and felony cases; (3) Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church which provides space for operations and administration; (4) The Homeless Coalition which administers community-wide case management software (ServicePoint); (5) The Nation Institute of Corrections which provides a wide range of training for correctional professionals; (6) Gifts-In-Kind which supplies Non-Profit Organizations with donated goods and services; (7) The SE TN Workforce Investment District which provides YES funds to serve 19-21 ex-offenders; (8) The City of Chattanooga and Community Impact which have joined us on a reentry planning project funded by the JEHT Foundation (NY); and (9) The National Institute of Justice which is conducting a three year evaluation of our program with Caliber Associates, Urban Institute and The University of Tennessee.

Maintaining a mixed staff of industry professionals and ex-offenders represents a partnership with our clients that also models our ultimate objective (i.e., their full restoration and participation in society).

Past program successes:

CEI has successfully managed a variety of grant programs including a 4-year \$850,000 grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

7.5.7. Project Description

Need: Criminal offenders contend with a wide range of barriers to obtaining and maintaining gainful employment.ⁱ Many of these barriers (e.g., unreliable transportation, unstable housing, and un-addressed childcare needs) are common among low-income citizens, while others are uniquely related to the re-entry process of individuals returning to their communities after periods of incarceration. Men and women who have served time in prison frequently have substance abuse problems, spotty work histories, poor educational backgrounds, physical and mental health problems, and face a bias against them in the competition for jobs.ⁱⁱ Any one of these barriers can impede an offender's ability to become employed. Together, they create formidable obstacles to getting, maintaining, and advancing on a job. In many cases these barriers also limit the ability of offenders to satisfy basic obligations, thwart community transition (especially in cases where strong support systems are not present), and ultimately fuel the recidivism process.

Within the industries targeted by CEI to employ its clients, there exists a wide range of restrictions in hiring policies affecting ex-offenders as well as varying attitudes about the legitimacy of such policies (whether prohibiting or permitting their employment). Almost 17% of area firms report policies that prohibit employing anyone who has been convicted of a felony crime regardless of its nature or severity. Furthermore, just 15% report having knowingly hired candidates with felony convictions – indicating a general resistance in hiring practices by human resource managers and suggesting that the market segment we serve is considerably smaller than one might expect.ⁱⁱⁱ

There is a clear link between unemployment and an offender's continued criminal activity, with one Texas study showing that an unemployed offender is three times more likely to return to prison than an offender who has a job.^{iv} If this is true, Chattanooga faces an acute problem: Findings of a survey of the employment situations of probationers and parolees in the Chattanooga area conducted by CEI with the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga shows that fewer than 40% have full-time jobs.

The present proposal seeks to reduce or eliminate the delays in employment for adult felony offenders who are being released from the Department of Corrections to the Chattanooga area as well as to shorten periods of unemployment for those who are serving time in the community under supervision of the Board of Probation and Parole.

The need for greater employment assistance for ex-offenders was established through interviews and surveys conducted with stakeholder groups and through planning and research with our New Ventures Committee and the Chattanooga Reentry Roundtable, both of which involve the participation of ex-offenders.

Goals: There are incredible inefficiencies in the criminal justice system that account for lengthy delays at practically every point in the process (especially at points of transition from one agency to another). The most serious of these delays occur at the point of reentry where jurisdiction for an offender is transferred from The Department of Corrections to The Department of Probation and Parole – between 60 and 120 days on the average. With 478 inmates released to Chattanooga last year and a confinement cost to tax-payers of \$18,662 per year, the potential savings in

eliminating this delay is staggering – \$1.5 million. Additional savings resulting from improvements in the reentry process just for Chattanooga are inmates (under 5% of the population) are estimated to be \$2.7 million.

This waste can be diminished or eliminated – and public safety improved – by coordinating existing community services around discharge plans which include providing immediate or near-immediate employment to offenders at the point of reentry. As a result of achieving greater coordination in discharges and easier access to employment, the present project will:

- Eliminate delays in discharge for prisoners returning home to Chattanooga
- Reduce the unemployment rate for probationers or parolees
- Improve offender monitoring by BOPP field officers and their ability to impose sanctions
- Reduce failures during reentry caused by preventable hardships
- Improve public safety

Target Clients: In Chattanooga, Tennessee's fourth largest city, there were slightly over 2,000 adults serving time on parole or probation at yearend 2004 – 3% of the statewide total:

- 40% were convicted of property offenses
- 30% were convicted of drug offenses
- 28% were convicted of violent offenses
- 10% were convicted of robbery
- 4% were convicted of sex offenses

The rate of criminal recidivism in Tennessee varies by source from about 45% reported by the Tennessee Department of Corrections in 2001 to about 56% reported by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation in 1997. This rate has fluctuated historically, however it has been consistently high – to the point that the Comptroller of the Treasury Office of Research in a special report asserted that “Tennessee ex-inmates are returning to prison in record numbers for violating parole or for committing new crimes.”

One unmistakable trend in release data is the increasing number of TDOC inmates that are being discharged directly to the community without any supervision. As reported in the most current “Blue Book” by TDOC this number has increased over the ten years ending FY 2003 both in raw numbers (1,600 to 4,705 system-wide) and as a percent of all releases (17.2% to 36.7%) and represents both a public safety and a human concern.

This trend is the most noticeable in the categories of sexual offenses and assaults where inmates are discharged directly to the community at a much greater rate than they are to community supervision. During FY 2003 for instance only 16 sexual offenders were released to parole while 253 were release directly to the community; and 252 offenders with assault convictions were released on parole while 664 were released directly to the community.

CEI currently serves 200-250 ex-offenders a year in its programs. Although the actual service population is not an exact sample of the general offender population in Chattanooga, some of the data collected during the intake process illustrate the serious obstacles facing many offenders as they attempt to gain control over their lives and apply themselves in pro-social activities.

More than half of the offenders served at Endeavors have been arrested for felony charges more than once and a quarter have served multiple periods of incarceration. Just 45 percent were employed at the time of arrest. Thirty percent are emotionally repressed as measured by the Taylor Johnson Temperament Analysis, most likely resulting from childhood trauma. While up to 50 percent report completing high school or obtaining a GED, 57 percent score below the fourth grade level in language tests. Over 60 percent have probabilities for substance abuse disorders as measured by the Substance Abuse Screening and Subtle Indicator. On-site data collection and laboratory findings confirm that, at the time of admission, as many as 70 percent have recently used at least one of the NIDA-5 drugs.

Without community assistance many offenders quickly become dependent on welfare systems, relapse into substance abuse, lose their residence, and all too frequently commit further crimes and return to prison, having made additional victims out of law-abiding citizens and costing the public purse many billions of dollars a year.

Approach: Under the current program development proposal, a Temporary Employment Service will be established as a business venture under CEI's governance and management auspices. Based upon the successful experiences of organizations like Delancey Street Foundation (San Francisco), Pioneer Human Services (Seattle), Project Hired (Santa Clara) and DePaul Industries (Portland), this model will enable CEI to pursue an income-generating activity that will also increase the skill-base and employment-potential of its clients.

CEI will place its clients in temporary employment positions by either directly contracting with select target companies or by serving as a secondary source of temporary manpower for a primary staffing agency. In either case, CEI will provide carefully screened and selected manpower to customers in a way that addresses some common problems experienced by businesses with temporary staffing – e.g., unfilled orders, poor performance, elevated accident rates, high turn-over and large conversion fees. While working in temporary positions, clients will continue to participate in day and evening classes at CEI that address a specific set of barriers, to meaningful employment and that help to prevent them from re-offending.

Those who are participating in training and support activities and meeting performance standards in work assignments will be eligible for higher pay and better assignments. Those who are not participating or falling short of performance standards will be dropped to a lower tier or eliminated from the program entirely. This process of moving up-and-out (positive terminations) or moving down-and-out (negative terminations) will continue until clients obtain assignments that are – either by design or good luck – converted to permanent jobs (or loses their places at CEI).

In general, use of temporary workers is an important strategy for American business and, as a result, the temporary staffing industry is rapidly expanding. The staffing industry has been characterized as a “bright spot” in the employment market. A 2004 first quarter national survey found that U.S. staffing firms employed 9.1 percent more people in the first quarter of 2004 than in the same period last year, an average of 2.3 million temporary and contract workers per day. Temporary help revenues in the first quarter totaled \$14.1 billion, 7.8 percent more than the same

period last year. One analyst predicts that temporary help employment will increase by 9.3 percent this year. And longer term, the industry is expected to create more new jobs than any other.

CEI's initial market analysis for this venture has included meetings with HR managers of businesses in the Chattanooga area that use temporary workers and with local representatives of the temporary staffing industry.

When fully implemented we anticipate managing a workforce of approximately 100-120 temporary employees that turns over 3 times a year.

Staff. Because the skills required to manage a competitive employment agency are different from those required to manage a social service agency, the present proposal requires all new – although small (4 member) – staff. A Project Manager will be hired to oversee the implementation and general management of the project. Two Sales Representative will develop new customers and cultivate existing customers. And an Accounts Manager fill orders for labor.

Program Partners. The major partnerships that need to be managed for this project to succeed are with The Board of Probation and Parole (who need a source of dependable employment for its clients) and with local employers (who need a source of dependable labor). Managing these partners in a value chain will create a cycle of increasing returns that will ultimately benefit the community through incremental improvements to public safety.

Program Outcomes: Recognizing the important work we are doing in Chattanooga, The National Institute of Justice selected CEI as one of five programs in the nation for a rigorous outcome evaluation. This 3-year project will assess the impact of our program on public safety, its cost-effectiveness relative to alternatives and whether Endeavors can be transferred to other communities. Along with our other programs and services, the present proposal will be evaluated by NIJ to determine the impact of Temporary Employment Service on CEI, its clients and the rate of recidivism in Chattanooga. Once established, the channels for obtaining this information will remain in place for us to continue to track our clients and the effectiveness of our programs and services.

Demographic, assessment, and progress notes are managed in ServicePoint and employment records will be managed in eEmpAct[®], an industry solution for temporary employment agencies.

Sustainability: Changing patterns of philanthropy and public funding priorities have negatively impacted nonprofit organizations across the country. The growing challenge of sustaining a nonprofit organization exclusively with funding through grants, fund raising and public subsidies is becoming increasingly difficult and many have either ceased to fulfill their stated purposes or ceased to exist. To augment conventional funding streams, some charitable organizations are capitalizing their community assets in pursuit of profit-making enterprises. Such enterprises (the present proposal included) have two requirements: (1) They must help the organization achieve its social purpose mission and (2) they must be self-sustaining. This project will satisfy these requirements almost immediately and will not require any additional funding.

ⁱ Murphy, B. (1999). Program design manual: Employment retention and advancement project, Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services.

ⁱⁱ Data analysis at CEI reveals that over 50 percent have been arrested for felony charges more than once and 25 percent have served multiple periods of incarceration. Just 45 percent were employed at the time of arrest. Thirty percent are emotionally repressed as measured by the Taylor Johnson Temperament Analysis, most likely resulting from childhood trauma. While up to 50 percent report completing high school or obtaining a GED, 57 percent score below the fourth grade level in language tests. Over 60 percent have probabilities for substance abuse disorders as measured by the Substance Abuse Screening and Subtle Indicator. On-site data collection and laboratory findings confirm that, at the time of admission, as many as 70 percent have recently used at least one of the NIDA-5 drugs.

ⁱⁱⁱ Medley, Barbara C., Ph.D. *Chattanooga Endeavors, Inc. Employers Survey: January-April 2004*. Center for Applied Social Research, The University of at Chattanooga. (Unpublished).

^{iv} Eisenberg, M. (1990). Project RIO: Twelve month follow-up, March 1989 intakes. Austin, TX: Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Pardons and Paroles Division.

^v Although not exactly an enterprise solution, eEmpACT will move CEI in that direction by combining existing databases hence eliminating redundancies that cause unnecessary friction in our service offering and reducing complexities for staff.